



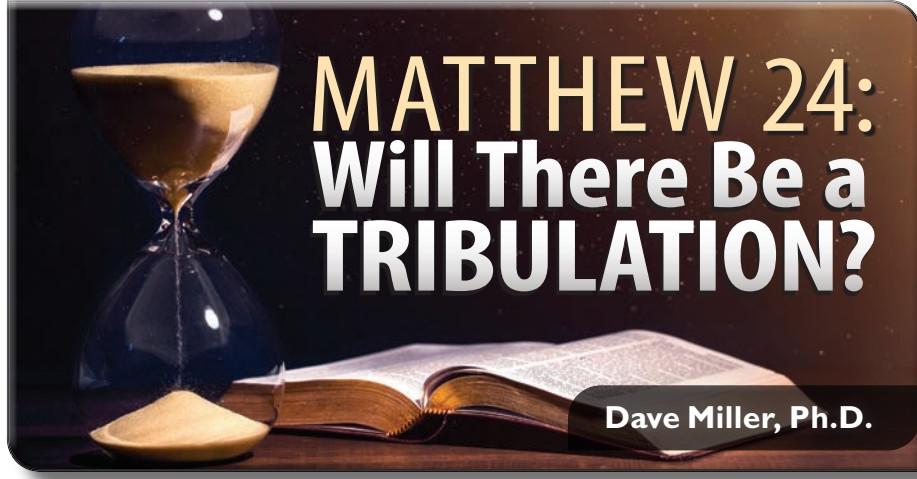
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Matthew 24: Will There Be a Tribulation?



NEW BOOK
The End Times



MATTHEW 24: Will There Be a TRIBULATION?

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Article In Brief...



The dispensational doctrine of the Tribulation relies heavily on its interpretation of the words of Jesus in Matthew 24. This article constitutes an exegetical analysis of those words.

Editor's Note: The following article is excerpted from the book *The End Times* just released by Apologetics Press. See the Centerspread for more information.

DISPENSATIONALISTS believe that Christ will come secretly and snatch away the saved at the “Rapture,” taking them directly to heaven where they will experience judgment and receive their reward. They say Revelation chapters four and five describe this heavenly scene. During this period, a seven-year Tribulation will rage on Earth, as described in Revelation chapters 4-19, that will culminate in the battle of Armageddon. Various passages are sprinkled here and there in this elaborate theory of the end times. But Matthew chapter 24 is perhaps the most prominent passage that is offered in an effort to prove an alleged “Tribulation.” Hence, an exegesis of this central proof-text is necessitated. The reader is urged to open a Bible and compare the text with what follows.

MATTHEW 24

IN Matthew 23, Jesus pronounced multiple woes upon the Jewish authorities of His day. In verse 38, He declared that the Jews’ house would be left to them “desolate.” He then left the immediate confines of the Temple complex, but paused at a distance with His disciples to continue the same line of thought. He directed their attention to the Temple and said: “There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be torn down” (Matthew 24:2). Such a declaration would have been shocking, if not horrifying, to these “dyed-in-the-wool” Jews that took great pride in the Temple. They, no doubt, assumed that the Temple—where God’s presence dwelt¹—would last forever. Privately, the disciples asked Jesus two questions: (1) “When will these things (that is, the Temple disruption) be?” and (2) “What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3). Jesus proceeded to answer these questions in such a

way as to distinguish between the destruction of the Temple on the one hand, and the end of the world on the other. He showed that they are completely separate events.

SIGNS HERALDING THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

JESUS began His response by delineating numerous signs that would take place prior to the toppling of the Temple. First, many would come claiming to be the Christ (vs. 5). As a matter of fact, near the time of Jerusalem’s fall in A.D. 70, many false messiahs arose, claiming to be the Christ. Writing in the first century A.D., Jewish priest, Pharisee, and historian, Flavius Josephus, reported that such messiahs became more numerous before the siege of the city.² Shortly after the establishment of Christianity in A.D. 30 (Acts 2), Gamaliel, early first century Pharisee and leading authority in the Jewish Sanhedrin, also alluded to such figures during the same time period (Acts 5:34-37). Likewise, the apostle Paul, writing in the mid-50s A.D., warned of false “apostles of Christ” then circulating (2 Corinthians 11:13).

Second, Jesus said that “wars and rumors of wars” would circulate, “but the end is not yet” (vs. 6). Numerous wars were engaged in by the Romans against various smaller nations as Rome continued her drive toward worldwide domination. At the same time, Rome had to cope constantly with revolt and rebellion among her conquered peoples. Josephus verified this fact.³ The “end” to which Jesus referred in this verse applied to the end of the Temple—not the end of the world.

Third, Jesus predicted that famine, pestilence, and earthquakes would occur (vs. 7). It is documented historical fact that during the years leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, famines and earthquakes occurred. There was a massive

famine during the reign of Claudius Caesar before the destruction of Jerusalem (Acts 11:28; cir. A.D. 47).⁴ An unusual number of great earthquakes occurred during the reign of Nero in A.D. 60-70, destroying many cities of Asia Minor.⁵ The occurrence of these signs between the time of Jesus' word (A.D. 30) and the destruction (A.D. 70) would be interpreted by those who heard Him articulate them as the direct fulfillment of Jesus' statements. But if Jesus' words apply to a yet future event, His words make no sense for there have been earthquakes and famines all over the world for the last 2,000 years, and the occurrence of them today is no sign at all.

The fact is that earthquakes could not have been intended by God to be a sign of the end of the world. Some 500,000 earthquakes are detectable in the world each year with only 100,000 of those being "felt."⁶ Many go undetected because they hit remote areas or have very small magnitudes. Nor are the number of earthquakes increasing: "The ComCat earthquake catalog contains an increasing number of earthquakes in recent years—not because there are more earthquakes, but because there are more seismic instruments and they are able to record more earthquakes."⁷ Since earthquakes have been fairly constant for the last 2,000 years, and occur on a daily basis, they would be completely useless in attempting to recognize the end of the world. However, if Jesus intended them to be **immediate** signs, contemporaneous with the first century, they would have served a useful purpose. From A.D. 30 to 70, each time an earthquake occurred, the disciples would have been instantly reminded of Jesus' prediction and its impending fulfillment.

Fourth, Jesus further stated that the apostles would be hated, persecuted, and even killed (vs. 9). As it

turned out, Peter, Paul, James (Acts 12:2), and James the Less⁸ were all put to death before the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus said that false prophets would arise, many Christians would falter, and evil would abound (vss. 10-13). As the pressure of persecution increased during the early decades of Christianity, so the faith of many decreased. Apostasy became prevalent. It is during such turmoil that false teachers make their mark by capitalizing on spiritual confusion, doubt, and weakness (cf. Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:29-30; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Peter 2:1-2).

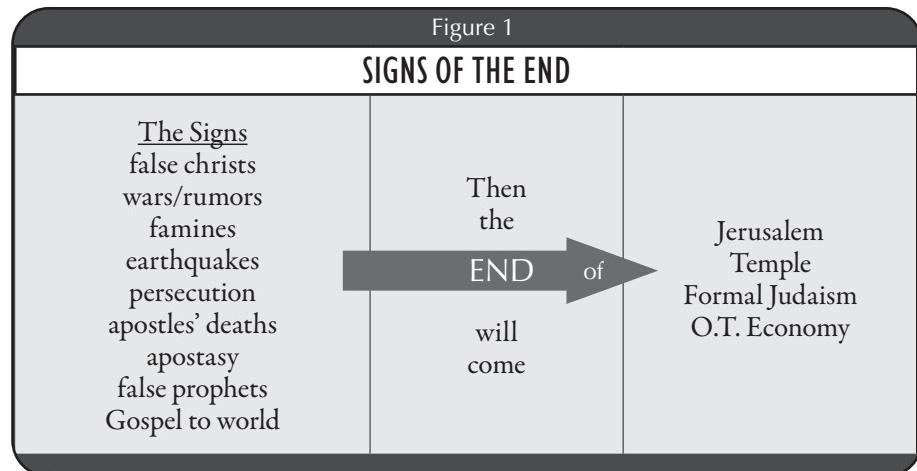
Fifth, Jesus said that the Gospel would be preached in all the world (vs. 14). It is also historical fact that the Gospel was preached to all the world prior to the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem. Paul wrote to Christians in Rome (A.D. 58) and said their faith was spoken of "throughout the whole world" (Romans 1:8). When Paul wrote to the church of Christ at Colossae (A.D. 62), the Gospel was "bearing fruit and increasing" (Colossians 1:6) in the entire world, which can only happen if the seed is first sown "in all the world." In fact, Paul flatly stated that the Gospel had been preached "to every creature which is under heaven," or "in all creation under heaven" (Colossians 1:23, KJV/NASB). The point is clear: The

Gospel was preached to the world prior to A.D. 70 as Jesus predicted.

THE FULFILLMENT OF THE SIGNS BROUGHT THE END

ONCE all these signs (i.e., false Christs, wars/rumors of wars, famines/earthquakes, persecution, death of the apostles, the apostasy of many, the rise of false prophets, and worldwide proclamation of the Gospel) came to pass, Jesus said the "end" would come (vs. 14). That is, the end of Jerusalem, the end of the Temple, the end of formal Judaism, and the end of the Old Testament economy would occur (see Figure 1). Jesus said this end would come about with the presence of the "abomination of desolation" in the holy place (vs. 15). He applied Daniel 9:27 to the presence of the Roman army and its ruthless military commander at the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (cf. Luke 21:20).⁹

Consequently, Jesus urged the faithful in Judea to "flee into the mountains" (vs. 16). History records a remarkable factor concerning the fall of Jerusalem. With the approach of A.D. 70, Jewish Christians took the invasion of the Roman armies as the appointed sign which Christ had given. Upon seeing the Roman military machine in full march, Jewish Christians dropped everything and





made their escape to Pella, a village east of the Jordan in Perea about 15 miles south of the Sea of Galilee.¹⁰ Thus, while God was bringing due wrath upon unbelieving Jews, He made provision for those Jews who had become Christians to escape. **Observe:** If this passage refers to the Rapture—and the saved were about to be removed to heaven—it would have been superfluous for Jesus to tell them to flee the city.

Jesus pronounced woe on those who, in facing the hardships that would occur, would have the added difficulties associated with pregnancy, and protecting and nursing children—especially if it occurred in winter or on the Sabbath (vss. 19-20). Bearing and caring for children is a difficult task in and of itself. But such functions become incredibly difficult when one is “on the run.” Likewise, escape from the onslaught of a merciless military force would be complicated by the conditions that accompany the wintertime. The cold and hunger would constitute hardship on children and adults alike. The allusion to the Sabbath refers to the fact that Jewish authorities would still be enforcing observance of the Sabbath

with closed city gates (Nehemiah 13:19). Thus, these two verses deal with hindrances to flight from the Roman besiegement of Jerusalem.

Jesus further stated that “great tribulation” would be associated with these events, comparably worse than at any time and resulting in the loss of many lives (vss. 21-22). We who live subsequent to A.D. 70 have difficulty fathoming the magnitude of the tribulation experienced during the destruction of Jerusalem. At that time, hundreds of thousands of Jews were crowded

together from all over the world to observe Passover. The mass misery that resulted from the Roman siege—which lasted five months—was extensive.¹¹ Interestingly, Josephus, an eyewitness, alluded to the atrocity in words reminiscent of Jesus’ own words: “neither did any other city suffer such miseries...from the beginning of the world.”¹² The phrase “nor ever shall be” shows that Jesus had in mind a time near His own day with much time to come **after** the event. If He was alluding to some period near the end of time (as per dispensationalism), He would not have added such words since there would be no future time left for such an occurrence. God could have easily permitted every single Jew to be wiped from the face of the Earth. But for the sake of His church (which included converted Jews), the period of tribulation was shortened (vs. 22).

Next, Jesus warned that during the period leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, false Christs and false prophets would come forward and display magical tricks to deceive people into thinking they were authentic representatives of God (vss. 23-26). When people face severe and intense disruption



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The Roman victory against Jerusalem was commemorated in Rome with the Arch of Titus, which depicts the valuables seized from the Temple, including the Temple menora.

to their lives, they tend to become easy prey for conmen and charlatans who seek to exploit the hardships and vulnerabilities of others. Jesus warned of this phenomenon as the time for Jerusalem's destruction grew nearer. When any individuals, even in our own day, seek to seduce people into believing that the Lord's final coming is imminent, Jesus says, "Don't believe it!" (cf. vs. 26). Why? Because when Jesus comes at the end of time, **everyone** will know it. The Second Coming will be as visible and as evident as a blinding flash of lightening that covers the entire sky (vs. 27).

In contrast with the **ultimate** return of Jesus, the coming of Jesus in judgment on **Jerusalem** would be discernible on very different grounds: "For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles¹³ will be gathered together" (vs. 28). Typically classified as a type of vulture due to its carrion feeder traits, the eagle was the symbol of Roman power. It was carried by the different units of the Roman army wherever Roman authority was being exerted.¹⁴ The contemporaries were readily familiar with this fact. Thus, in A.D. 70, the Roman vultures swarmed over Jerusalem and devoured the carcass of apostate Judaism.¹⁵

Jesus then resorted to the use of several highly figurative phrases which are based upon Old Testament apocalyptic language: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (vs. 29). The phrase "after the tribulation of those days" means after the horrible events that occurred during the siege of the city, which history records began on August 10, A.D. 70 and lasted some two months. In that short period, 1.1 million died in unspeakable anguish, and 97,000 were taken as

Figure 2

JESUS USED APOCALYPTIC/FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE TO REFER TO THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM IN A.D. 70	
Isaiah 13	Matthew 24
"The day of the Lord is near" (vs. 6)	"It is near—at the doors" (vs. 33)
"The stars/constellations will not give light" (vs. 10)	"The stars shall fall from heaven" (vs. 29)
"Rising sun will be darkened" (vs. 10)	"The sun shall be darkened" (vs. 29)
"The moon will not give its light" (vs. 10)	"The moon shall not give her light" (vs. 29)
"I will shake the heavens" (vs. 13)	"The powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (vs. 29)

slaves.¹⁶ After the tribulation of the siege, the final destruction occurred.

The English reader and the Western mind have difficulty conceptualizing such extravagant expressions. The temptation is to take the words literally. But Jesus merely did what many of the Old Testament prophets did when they announced the destruction of cities and countries in symbolic, apocalyptic imagery. All one need do is read Isaiah 13 to see that Jesus was incorporating terminology reminiscent of the description of the destruction of Babylon recorded in Isaiah 13 where the language referred to the military onslaught of the Medes in the sixth century B.C. that brought about the downfall of the Babylonian empire (see Figure 2).

Similarly, Isaiah depicted the destruction of Edom in terminology that spoke of the cosmos being dissolved and the sky rolling up like a scroll (34:4). Ezekiel portrayed the fate of Egypt in terms of the darkening of the stars, Moon, and Sun (32:7). There is no question that such language is highly figurative, hyperbolic, and designed to instill an **impression of great calamity**, to create an **effect** in the mind of the hearer—but not intended to be taken literally. If God can discuss the overthrow of Babylon, Egypt,

and Edom in such flamboyant, dramatic terminology, surely, He can do the same when discussing the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70—without us jumping to the conclusion that He was referring to the end of time.

At this point would "appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven" (vs. 30). In other words, looking again at vs. 29, the **darkening** of the Jewish Temple, the **shaking up** of the Jewish commonwealth, and the **fall** of Jewish authority through the instrumentality of imperial Rome was **the sign or signal that Christ had come in judgment on Israel**. He was the One responsible for the misery that would enshroud the Jewish nation. Jesus had done exactly what He had told Caiaphas he could expect to witness personally: "the Son of man is coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64). Jews knew that such language was completely normal when describing God's execution of wrath **in history**. When God punished Egypt in the long ago, He "rode on a swift cloud...into Egypt" (Isaiah 19:1)—a graphically appropriate way to envision God's vengeance, in time, in history.¹⁷

Next, angels would go forth with a great trumpet sound and gather the elect (vs. 31). Historians

(cont. on p. 32)

THE END **TIMES**

WILL THERE BE A RAPTURE? TRIBULATION? ANTICHRIST?
ARMAGEDDON? MILLENNIUM?



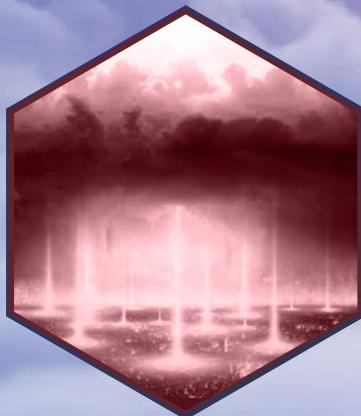
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report that once Jewish opposition to Christianity (reflected throughout the book of Acts and in Paul's epistles¹⁸) was removed in A.D. 70, the **true nation** of God (i.e., the Church of Christ—the "holy nation" [1 Peter 2:9]—the Christian elect) began to experience unparalleled effectiveness. The sound of the Gospel trumpet was heard more clearly than ever before. The word for "angel" (*angelos*) is the normal Greek word for "messenger."¹⁹ It is used in the New Testament to refer both to angelic visitors from heaven (Matthew 4:6,11; 28:2; Mark 1:12; Luke 16:22; Galatians 3:19) as well as **human** messengers (Matthew 11:10; Luke 7:24,27; 9:52; James 2:25). In this passage it refers to the emissaries of the Gospel who, by means of the preached Word, gathered individuals into the elect fold from all over the world.²⁰ Such phraseology is reminiscent of the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25) in which every 50th year, the believing community sounded a ram's horn all through the land and proclaimed the year as a year of release or liberation.

Jesus next uttered a brief parable about a fig tree (vs. 32-33). Tender branches and new leaves on a fig tree function as **signs**—signals that summer is near. Likewise, the signs that Jesus delineated pinpointed the time when Jerusalem was to be destroyed. Once faithful disciples began to observe the unfolding of these signs, they would realize that the city was on the verge of being besieged by the Roman armies. They could then "look for their redemption" (Luke 21:28), i.e., act upon their providentially pre-arranged escape plan and receive deliverance from the Romans and potential future persecutions of Jewish authority. The repetition of the second person plural pronoun is further proof that Jesus was referring to **His own generation**, not a

generation that was centuries in the future: "So **you** also, when **you** see..." (vs. 33).

Jesus ended His response to the first question asked by His disciples with the words: "This generation shall not pass, till all these things are fulfilled" (vs. 34). The generation to whom He was addressing Himself would still be living when "all these things" would occur. Thus every single sign that Jesus pinpointed would occur during **that** generation. Some, however, in an attempt to apply Jesus' words to the premillennial framework and the end of time, suggest that the Greek word for "generation" (*genea*) may also be translated "race," in which case Jesus was simply saying that the Jewish race would not pass out of existence before all these things happened to them. But if this allegation is correct, then Jesus is put in the position of telling the Jews what would happen to their race, and then saying that their race would not pass away until

everything that was going to happen to their race happened—an absurdly redundant notion. Why would God declare a group's fate, and then assure the group that they would still be around to suffer that fate? Obviously, God would never have told them the specifics of their fate if they were not going to be present to experience those specifics. The fact of the matter is that the word "generation" is used 13 times²¹ in the Gospel of Matthew and always designates those who are living at a particular point in time—comparable to modern American expressions like "baby boomers" and "Gen X." In fact, in Matthew 23:36-39, where the context is the same as Matthew 24, Jesus spoke of the contemporary population of Jerusalem as the "generation" that He had in mind—the one that He sought to "gather" under His wings and whose house would be "left desolate." See Figure 3 on the next page.



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TRANSITION: NO SIGNS HERALDING THE SECOND COMING

VERSE 35 functions as a transition verse, placing closure on Jesus' answer to the disciples' **first** question. Beginning in verse 36, Jesus turned His attention to dealing with the disciples' **second** question. He emphatically distinguished between the destruction of Jerusalem, which He had been discussing, and the end of the world or Second Coming. Even if the disciples had not asked about "the end of the world," it would have been appropriate for Jesus to have dealt with the matter since He would not want the two to be confused. So He alluded to "**that day**," i.e., the day heaven and earth will pass away (vs. 35), the world will end, and Christ would come again (vs. 3). Jesus went out of His way to stress **the total absence of signs** signaling the end of the world and the Second Coming. He declared that His final coming would be comparable to the Deluge of Noah's day (vs. 37), in that it will be **totally unexpected**. Right up to the very day that Noah and his family entered the ark, life was going on **as usual**. No signs! Jesus said farmers will be in the field **as usual** (vs. 40); women will be involved in their activities **as usual** (vs. 41). Jesus even likened the unexpected nature of His final coming to the exploits of a thief (vs. 43). Both Paul (1 Thessalonians 5:2) and Peter (2 Peter 3:10) repeat this analogy. As the coming of a thief in the night is preceded by absolutely no signs, so the final coming of Jesus will be **preceded by absolutely no signals**.

Thus, verses 36-51, as well as the entirety of chapter 25, refer to the end of time and the Second Coming. Jesus' first point was that, whereas those who give proper heed to the signs can pinpoint the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, no one can pinpoint the day of Christ's return.

Why? Absolutely no signs will occur to alert people to the Second Coming. Verses 37-39 clearly show that life on this Earth will be going on as it always has with "business as usual." The time of Jesus' ultimate return is unpredictable and will be totally unexpected, unaccompanied by signs to warn of its approach.

SUMMARY

IT is not uncommon to hear people discussing the end of time and delineating the "signs" that they say are proof that Christ's return is imminent.²² When "wars and rumors of wars," "earthquakes," and various political/military events

Figure 3

13 OCCURRENCES OF "GENERATION" (<i>GENEA</i>) IN MATTHEW		
Verses	Passages	Meaning
1:17(4)	"So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations , from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations , and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations ."	All 4 occurrences refer to the populations that were contemporaneous with each descendant from Abraham to Christ named in verses 1-16.
11:16	"But to what shall I liken this generation ? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions."	The context shows that Jesus was referring to those who were contemporaries with Himself and John the Baptizer, including the then populations of the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, & Capernaum.
12:39,41, 42,45	"An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.... So shall it also be with this wicked generation ."	Each occurrence refers to the contemporaries of Jesus who would know of Jesus being in the tomb and whose resistance manifested toward Jesus was to be contrasted with the receptivity manifested by the population of Nineveh in Jonah's day and the Queen of Sheba who visited Solomon.
16:4	"A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah."	Remarks addressed to the Pharisees & Sadducees who were alive when Jesus' death/resurrection occurred.
17:17	"Then Jesus answered and said, 'O faithless and perverse generation , how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.'"	Jesus directed these words specifically to His disciples due to their failure to expel a demon.
23:36	"Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation ."	Contextually, Jesus was referring to the then inhabitants of Jerusalem.
24:34	"Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place."	Same context as 23:36

that one observes in the news occur, they are quick to connect those occurrences with their conviction that Christ is about to return. They claim to be representing the Bible in their calculations and forecasts—even though, to date, every attempt to pinpoint the date of Christ's return has failed miserably.

The only hope of the entire world is to render obedience to the written revelation of the Bible (Matthew 24:46). Noah preached, apparently for many years, in hopes of alerting the world's population to the coming judgment upon them. They refused to listen and amend their ways. Likewise, the only "tip-off" available today is the Gospel of Jesus Christ that instructs every accountable individual what to do to be right with God. When one brings one's life into compliance with those directives, "signs" by which to anticipate the return of Christ are completely superfluous. As Jesus emphasized: "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming" (Matthew 24:42).

In fact, the signs²³ preceding the destruction of Jerusalem were pinpointed for **Christian** Jews rather than for unbelieving Jews. The signs served the purpose of alert-

ing Christians to enact the means of safety and escape from physical threat posed by the Romans. The signs did **not** serve the purpose of achieving **spiritual salvation**. Signs from God were never intended to serve such a purpose.²⁴ Even so, today, no signs are needed to (1) provide instructions to Christians so they can avoid **physical** harm from persecutors, (2) nor are they needed to provide **spiritual** salvation for non-Christians—which can only be attained via obedience to the message of the Gospel (Romans 1:16). To repeat: the signs given by Jesus in Matthew 24 enabled Christians to avoid death at the hands of the Romans. No signs have been given by Jesus by which Christians today can evade future physical danger.

When studied carefully in context and in light of history, verses in Matthew 24 that dispensationalists claim refer to the end times are seen to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. Without a doubt, there will be tribulation in the world. Christians are, in fact, assured of such, even as Paul explained to the Christians in the cities of Galatia: "We must through **many tribulations** enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22; cf. 2

Timothy 3:12; John 16:33). Christians always have and always will endure tribulation. But there will be no future period of tribulation from which saints will be exempt as the dispensationalists describe. The world may well experience World War III. Horrible atrocities may well be unleashed upon humanity. But such future events will in no way result as the fulfillment of biblical teaching. The Bible simply does not teach that there will be a future seven year "Tribulation" on Earth that will culminate in a battle of Armageddon.

ENDNOTES

¹ 1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Samuel 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chronicles 13:6; Isaiah 37:16.

² Flavius Josephus (1974 reprint), *Antiquities of the Jews*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), XX.V.1; XX.VIII.6; Flavius Josephus (1974 reprint), *The Wars of the Jews*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), II.XIII.4.

³ E.g., *Antiquities...*, XX.

⁴ See F.F. Bruce (1962), "Christianity Under Claudius," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 44:309-326, March, 4:309.

⁵ Cornelius Tacitus (1805), *Annals* in *The Works of Cornelius Tacitus*, trans. Arthur Murphy (London: John Stockdale), XII.43/58; XIV.27; XV.22.

⁶ "Cool Earthquake Facts" (2022), USGS, <https://www.usgs.gov/programs/earthquake-hazards/cool-earthquake-facts#:~:text=It%20is%20estimated%20that%20there,100%20of%20them%20cause%20damage>.

⁷ "Why Are We Having So Many Earthquakes?" (no date), USGS, <https://www.usgs.gov/faqs/why-are-we-having-so-many-earthquakes-has-naturally-occurring-earthquake-activity-been>.

⁸ "Hegesippus" (1871), "Fragments from His Five Books of Commentaries on the Acts of the Church," *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* in *The Works of Lactantius in Anti-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh: T.T. Clark), 2:142-144; Eusebius Pamphilus (1850), *Ecclesiastical History* (New York: Stanford & Swords), 2.23 (pp. 75-79); Flavius Josephus (1974 reprint), *Antiquities of the Jews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), 20.9.1 (pp. 139-140).

⁹ Steve Mason (2016), *A History of the Jewish War, AD 66-74* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

¹⁰ Boettner, p. 201; Craig Keener (1993), *The IVP Bible Background Com-*

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mentary (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press), p. 113; Marvin Wilson (1989), *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 76; Eusebius Pamphilus (2005), *Church History*, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 3.5.3, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.toc.html>; Si Sheppard (2013), *The Jewish Revolt AD 66-74* (Long Island City, NY: Osprey Publishing), pp. 14-10; Mordechai Gichon (1981), "Cestius Gallus' Campaign in Judaea," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 113:56; Epiphanius, De pond, et Mens, 15. Also J. Scott (1998), "Did Jerusalem Christians Flee to Pella?" *Archaeology Conference* (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College), https://web.archive.org/web/20180620224108/http://www.preteristarchive.com/Bibliography/1998_scott_flee-pella.html. "It is remarkable, that by the special providence of God, after the Romans under Cestius Gallus made their first advance towards Jerusalem, they suddenly withdrew again, in a most unexpected, and indeed impolitic, manner; at which Josephus testifies his surprise, since the city might then have been easily taken. By this means they gave as it were a signal to the Christians to retire; which, in regard to this admonition, they did, some to Pella, and others to mount Libanus, and thereby preserved their lives"—Philip Doddridge (1807), *The Family Expositor* (Hartford: Lincoln & Gleason), 1:280.

¹¹ George Wilkins (1816), *The History of the Destruction of Jerusalem* (Nottingham: G. Stretton), pp. 113,165.

¹² *The Wars...*, V.10.5.

¹³ A number of more recent English translations use the term "vultures" for the underlying Greek word ἄετοι. Those that render the term "eagles" include the ASV, BRG, DARBY, DRA, JUB, KJV, MEV, NKJV, NRSVUE, RSV, WYC, and YLT. A number of Greek lexicons define the term as "eagle," including Henry Liddell & Robert Scott (1940), *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1:27; J.H. Thayer (1901), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1977 reprint), p. 18; G. Abbott-Smith (1922), *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), p. 10; Samuel Bagster (no date), *The Analytical Greek Lexicon* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons), p. 7; Frederick Danker (2000), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago), third edition, p. 22; et al.

¹⁴ John Lightfoot (no date), *A Commentary of the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*, Philologos.org, 24:28, http://philologos.org/_eb_jl/default.htm; cf. William Arndt and F.W. Gingrich (1957), *A Greek-English Lexicon of*

the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), p. 19—"eagle symbol of swiftness."

¹⁵ Cf. Foy E. Wallace (1960), *God's Prophetic Word* (Oklahoma City, OK: Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Publications), p. 252. This book is an excellent resource for studying Matthew 24 (pp. 246ff).

¹⁶ Josephus, *The Wars...*, VI.9.3. See also Kyle Butt (2021), "The Fall of Jerusalem," *Reason & Revelation*, 41[4]:38-41,44-47.

¹⁷ The use of the term "tribes" refers to the Jewish families that mourned the fall of national Judaism—Jewish tribes scattered throughout the world.

¹⁸ E.g., Acts 13:45, 2 Corinthians 3:14, Galatians 2:4,12, Philippians 3:2, 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16.

¹⁹ Danker, p. 8.

²⁰ This use is likely the Holy Spirit's intended meaning in Revelation 1:20 and the seven occurrences in the two subsequent chapters (2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14), i.e., preachers.

²¹ Matthew 1:17(4 times); 11:16; 12:39,41,42,45; 16:4; 17:17; 23:36; 24:34.

²² See Dave Miller (2002), "There Will Be No Signs!" Apologetics Press, <https://apologeticspress.org/there-will-be-no-signs-937>.

²³ The Greek term *seimeion* (σημεῖον) has essentially two meanings in Scripture: (1) it can refer to a miraculous, supernatural occurrence or (2) it can refer to a non-miraculous indicator of something (Danker, p. 920). In Matthew 24, Jesus used the word to refer to non-miraculous, natural occurrences that would coincidentally occur in such a time frame that they could serve as contemporaneous alerts to the disciples to anticipate the

Roman siege of Jerusalem. Other occurrences of the word in a non-miraculous sense may be seen in Matthew 26:48, Luke 2:12, Romans 4:11, and 2 Thessalonians 3:17. The wars, rumors of wars, famines, and earthquakes were not miraculous occurrences—but simply ordinary events on Earth.

²⁴ Miraculous signs throughout Bible history served the singular purpose of confirming/authenticating the oral message presented by God's bona fide emissaries. For a discussion of the purpose of miracles, see Dave Miller (2003), *Modern-Day Miracles, Tongue-Speaking, and Holy Spirit Baptism: A Refutation—EXTENDED VERSION*, <https://apologeticspress.org/modern-day-miracles-tongue-speaking-and-holy-spirit-baptism-a-refutation-extended-version-1399/>; Dave Miller (2020), *Modern-Day Miracles? Do Miracles, Tongue-Speaking, & Holy Spirit Baptism Occur Today?* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press). One hymn which has attained considerable popularity over the years is R.E. Winsett's "Jesus Is Coming Soon." If there was any doubt about the song's premillennial intentions, the lyrics of verse two clearly betray the author's eschatological misconceptions. The phrases "love of so many cold," "evils abound," and "when these signs come to pass" are undeniable paraphrases of Matthew 24:12 and Luke 21:28,31. While the lyricist applies these conditions to the end of time and Christ's Second Coming, as we have seen, Jesus applied them to the destruction of Jerusalem which occurred in A.D. 70. See Dave Miller (2021), "Jesus Is Coming Soon?" Apologetics Press, <https://apologeticspress.org/jesus-is-coming-soon-1701/>.

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**NOTE FROM***The Editor***New AP Book: *The End Times***

A sizable segment of Christendom subscribes to the notion that the end of time is near, that the Rapture is imminent, followed by a worldwide Tribulation during which time the so-called Antichrist will arrive on the scene of world history, and that the battle of Armageddon will ensue, followed by the Millennium, with Jesus reigning on Earth for 1,000 years. But does the Bible **really** teach these doctrines? Does the Bible actually speak about Russia, China, and the modern state of Israel? Or is the Bible portrait much simpler and succinct? Does it really matter what one believes regarding the end times?

AP is pleased to release a new book that addresses these themes with biblical, historical, and linguistic analysis. The reader can be armed with scriptural responses to those who have been “taken in” by this ideology. In addition to an analysis of the premillennial framework, the reader is treated to a succinct portrait of the simplicity of the New Testament’s own depiction of the end of time on Earth. Suitable for classroom study, this volume contains over 300 review questions and 20 illustrative Figures.



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